

R E P O R T
of the Rector
to the
Board of Governors
and to the
University Community
on
Report of the University Committee on Priorities and Planning
and
Study on Mission and Strategy for the 80's

The Report of the University Committee on Priorities and Planning and Phase I of the Study on Mission and Strategy for the 80's were tabled with the Board of Governors and released to the University Community in September. Phase II of the Study on Mission and Strategy for the 80's will be available shortly, and I propose that it also be released to the University Community for its reaction before the Board takes any position on it.

The mandate of the University Committee on Priorities and Planning was as follows:

The committee, acting within a budget-oriented context, would be concerned with the shaping of the University future. Guided by the twin goals of high academic quality and accessibility to the community, it would focus on the academic programs, and recommend which among them should be emphasized or de-emphasized. It would also consider what administrative services would be necessary to support effectively the restated or redefined academic purposes. Within an eighties perspective, it would identify any changes or developments required during the coming three years.

The objectives of the Study on Mission and Strategy for the 80's were as follows:

- (1) to understand external perspectives of the University;
- (2) to catalyze an integrated internal view of mission and strategy;
- (3) to help broaden concepts of our role and potential;
- (4) to build a strategic framework for initiating practical actions;
- (5) to provide experience with the process and organization of strategic planning.

I had originally expected that there would be a substantial overlap between the two reports tabled in September, because they would broadly concentrate on the same fundamental concerns, whether described as "focus on the academic programs" or as "catalyze an integrated internal view of mission and strategy". As it turned out, the reports were substantially

different in the areas they chose to emphasize, and discussion on campus has been complicated by uncertainties about what really were the topics to be discussed.

Be that as it may, work on Phase II of the Study on Mission and Strategy for the 80's was proceeding over the summer and up to the present. While this report will not attempt to integrate in a formal way the reactions to the reports tabled in September, which were becoming available during the later stages of work on Phase II, it cannot help but be influenced by the discussions that have been taking place. It is important to recognize that while Phase I was conducted essentially by external consultants, and the alternative objectives put forward for consideration in Phase I were essentially the responsibility of the consultants, Phase II is the work of an internal group made up primarily, though not exclusively, of the senior academic administration of the University. It thus constitutes a proposal by that group for consideration by the University Community and by the Board of Governors. It is a proposed statement of the Mission of Concordia University for the 80's.

What is a Mission Statement?

One definition of a mission statement, from Case Currents, September 1982, is as follows:

"A university's mission statement sums up the academic identity of the institution. It covers the type of educational institution the university is, the kind of educational philosophy it espouses, and the specific educational aims and purposes it seeks to fulfill.

On the surface this task may appear to be a simple and straightforward rhetorical exercise, but it is more than that and it is hard to do. Different leaders within the university and different constituencies see the appropriate mission differently. Academic reasons for being are often implicit rather than explicit; they rarely come together into a coherent definition of institutional identity. The goal is clear - a mission statement and a sense of mission that are explicit and coherent. To achieve this requires a systematic process where all constituencies identify and accept the academic mission of a university."

What has been the Mission of Concordia University?

One revelation of the campus discussion has been the degree of confusion about what the mission of Concordia University has been, which in extreme form has manifested itself in the allegation that Concordia has not had a mission. Certainly, the style of Concordia has been to operate in such matters on the basis of the kind of implicit consensus referred to

above rather than on the basis of formal documentation, although the attached statement approved by Senate on April 28, 1978 as part of a response to the Document de consultation of the Commission d'étude sur les universités does contain some elements of a mission statement. I think, however, that Concordia University has had a rather clear mission, not basically different from those of its predecessor institutions, which could be set out as follows:

1. Build this university into a good university in the Canadian context. The Loyola and Sir George Williams of, say, twenty years ago were good institutions, but they were not fully universities as that term is understood in Canada, and in particular in Quebec. They were at that time essentially undergraduate teaching institutions that made little place for research or for graduate studies. It was considered essential to develop the capacity to be active in all three areas of university activity in order to respond to the emerging needs of the 60's and 70's, and in order to ensure the future of the institutions in a province that tended to define "university" in terms of the presence of all three

activities. While much of this had been accomplished by the time of the merger, or as a result of the merger itself, there remained the need to consolidate and extend these accomplishments in the early years of Concordia.

2. Adapt to the rapidly changing society in Quebec, and insert the university into a forward-looking role in Quebec. The major changes in Quebec during the past twenty years need no description. It has been a university goal to adapt its practices and its attitudes to the changing times, and to adopt a positive outlook toward them, in order best to serve all Quebec.
3. Emphasize serving the adult student population. This was the original purpose of Sir George Williams, and by the time of the merger Loyola had also devoted considerable attention to this mission. It remains a major purpose of Concordia University.
4. Make a university education available to as many people as possible. Today this mission often goes under the term "accessibility". Concordia and its predecessors gave a high priority to opening doors to as many qualified students as possible, and to providing flexible means of

admission for competent students who did not possess standard admission requirements.

Why Look for a New Mission Now?

While one can never fully achieve missions of the kind listed above, the university has nevertheless made substantial advances toward their accomplishment. The time has come to assess that accomplishment, restate the goals in terms appropriate to today's circumstances, and consider whether other purposes should be added.

With respect to building a good university, Concordia today belongs to the mainstream of Canadian universities, and looms much more prominently on the Canadian university scene than did its predecessors twenty years ago. This is not primarily a matter of size (although Concordia is one of the larger Canadian universities); it is the result of the calibre of research produced by many of our faculty, of the innovative approach to curriculum in many areas, and of serious attempts to emphasize the importance of good teaching despite the many distractions that the modern university must contend with. At one time students and faculty despite

difficulties took a certain perverse pride in belonging to a young institution on the way up. Today they respond rather as members of an institution that should have fully arrived, and react negatively to shortcomings imposed by our underfunding or for other reasons.

With respect to adapting to a changing Quebec, twenty years ago Loyola and Sir George Williams (like other universities in Quebec for that matter) operated largely without government financial support and were able to make their own decisions with few external constraints. They were certainly open to members of the French community who chose to enrol, but they had little formal contact with French-language institutions, and probably little understanding of the concerns and aspirations of French Quebec. As the political events of the 60's and 70's moved forward, the institutions reacted positively to the changes required to fit themselves into the Quebec of today.

With respect to adult learning, other universities and Departments of Education have today accepted a concept which as recently as a decade ago was relegated to a low priority, if it was not rejected entirely as a university activity. Serving adult students will no doubt remain an

important purpose of this university, but it is no longer a mission unique to us as it once was.

With respect to making a university education available, this University has typically responded to increases in the demand for admissions by trying to squeeze in as many students as possible. During the period of rapid university expansion the grant system would generate additional resources in following years, and the squeeze was considered preferable in the interim to turning away students. Resources did indeed increase, but by then a further round of new students had been admitted, and the squeeze became a continuing phenomenon, adding its effects to the historic underfunding of the university. The situation was difficult, but growth did generate enough new resources to keep the University going at an acceptable level of quality. Now, however, the growth period is believed to be past, and the government is cutting finances to the whole university system as a result of the economic difficulties of Quebec and its consequent financial problems. Increasingly, in areas where student interest is strong the University faces bottlenecks that are difficult to overcome in the 80's (shortages of space and facilities in some programmes, shortages

of qualified faculty in some disciplines). The University has found it necessary to impose quotas and limit enrolment in many areas in order to protect acceptable levels of quality.

Since Concordia University has largely achieved many of its goals as they existed for the circumstances of the 60's and the 70's, and circumstances have changed with respect to others, the time has come to review the University's mission in the context of the 80's, and to revise them as may appear best. This is the context of "Mission and Strategy for the 1980's". Phase II, entitled "Toward a Mission and Strategy for Concordia University" will present recommendations on the mission and strategy that Concordia should adopt for the period ahead. I hope that this proposal will help to focus discussion within the University on key issues for our future, and that the Board of Governors will find it a useful basis on which to declare in due course a university position.